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Ministry of Forests and Range

SMITHERS AND TELKWA ISSUED COMMUNITY FOREST AGREEMENT

SMITHERS – The Town of Smithers and Village of Telkwa have been issued a five-year probationary community forest agreement (CFA) through their joint operation of the Wetzin'kwa Community Forest Corporation.

"A community forest will provide the people of Smithers, Telkwa and the Wet'suwet'en with the opportunity to improve economic conditions for residents in the area, through locally developed and managed forestry operations," said Dennis MacKAY, MLA for Bulkley Valley-Stikine.

The agreement carries an initial five-year term, and grants the right to harvest up to 30,000 cubic metres of timber per year, on public forest lands within the Bulkley timber supply area.

The Wetzin'kwa Community Forest Corporation was named as a tribute to the teamwork and relationships that developed during consultation with the Wet'suwet'en Nation, which reviewed and supported the application and who are a member of the community forest corporation's board of directors. Wetzin'kwa is Wet' suwet'en for the Morice and Bulkley River and means "where blue green waters mix."

"We have long looked forward to a community forest – the mountain, forest and town are inseparable," said Smithers Mayor James Davidson. "Now we will have the opportunity to partner with the Wet'suwet'en and Telkwa as stewards of our resource."

"This is an exciting initiative and the Village of Telkwa is pleased to be part of a project that will provide opportunities for three communities, including the Wet'suwet'en and the Town of Smithers," said Telkwa Mayor Sharon Hartwell. "This project will provide benefits to the local economy."

"I feel that Wetzin'kwa community forest is good for the all communities involved," said Jeff Brown, Gitdumden Chief Madeek. "The best thing about it is it employs local community members, generates revenues that stay in the community, supports local non-profit organizations, and brings people from all walks of life, native and non-native, together to work for the benefit of all."

Community forest tenures are area-based, and give communities exclusive rights to harvest timber, as well as the opportunity to manage forest resources such as timber and plant products, recreation, wildlife, water and scenic viewscapes.

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Probationary community forest agreements are a form of legal tenure by which the Province transfers decision-making to communities that wish to more fully participate in the stewardship of local Crown forest resources. They are intended to stimulate long-term employment, forest-related education and skills training as well as other social, environmental and economic benefits while meeting environmental stewardship standards.

After an initial term of five years, the agreements may be replaced with a long-term agreement for 25 to 99 years.

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